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GERMAN MISINTERPRETATION OF THE UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER
POLICY AND ITS EFFECT ON GERMAN MORALE

3 February 1944

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GERMAN MISINTERPRETATION OF THE UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER
POLICY AND ITS EFFECT ON GERMAN MORALE

THE PROBLEM

1. To determine (a) the use made of the unconditional surrender formula in German propaganda and its effect upon Germany's morale and will to resist; (b) to elucidate, with a view to possible counter propaganda, the consequences of unconditional surrender for Germany in the light of representative United Nations declarations of intentions toward Germany.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

2. Germany's leaders have utilized the unconditional surrender formula to convince the German people that the sacrifices involved in continued resistance are far less disastrous than the consequences of defeat. They argue that unconditional surrender will give Germany's enemies the power to destroy her political existence, to starve and enslave her peoples and to bolshevize her country.

3. These arguments have been largely accepted by the German people and have, together with continued hope of a compromise peace, contributed to a substantial strengthening of German morale even in the face of the military reverses of the last months.

4. The Nazi interpretations of unconditional surrender are deliberate distortions of declared Allied policy toward the future of Germany. Such distortions have been made possible by the fact that official statements regarding unconditional surrender, with few exceptions, have included no clear formulation of our intentions in the treatment of Germany after her surrender.

5. In other contexts, Allied policy toward a Germany purged of its present aggressive leadership has been clearly set forth, to an

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effect altogether at variance with the German interpretation. Allied declarations include assurances that we do not propose to annihilate Germany as a nation, to visit indiscriminate reprisals against the German people, to enslave Germany economically, to deprive her of her essential resources, or to impose upon her a permanent status of inferiority as a nation.

6. The unconditional surrender formula is in no sense incompatible with the above policies, in the light of which its purposes and consequences could be clarified. Such elucidation could deprive German propagandists of their effective use of unconditional surrender to sustain at its present level Germany's morale and will to resist.

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THE FACTS OF THE CASE

7. The Casablanca formula of unconditional surrender has fulfilled a most useful function in bringing the United Nations closer together and in inspiring popular sentiment to face with determination the sacrifices involved in our assumption of the offensive. At the same time, the unconditional surrender formula has impeded the efforts of the United Nations to break the fighting will of the German people. The lack of an adequate Allied explanation of the meaning of unconditional surrender to the German people has permitted Nazi propaganda to cement the German people to its government by the use of the following arguments:

a. If Germany should surrender unconditionally, it will be completely at the mercy of ruthless conquerors. Unconditional surrender gives Germany's enemies the power to do with the German nation as they please.

b. The United Nations will destroy Germany's national life, accomplish her political dismemberment, annihilate her unified economy, enslave her men and children and send them to foreign parts and permit the German people to starve.

c. The unconditional surrender formula implies Anglo-American consent to Russian domination and opens the path to bolshevization of Germany.

d. Germany has every reason to continue her struggle: it may win better terms through the development of disunity among its enemies or by wearing them down until they will accept something less than unconditional surrender. The German nation cannot fare better by surrendering unconditionally: there is no difference between annihilation by consent and annihilation without consent.

(See Appendix, Excerpts from Recent German Propaganda on the Consequences of Unconditional Surrender)

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8. It must be assumed that these arguments, in whole or in part, have been accepted by the German people. Recent reports indicate that, during the last three or four months, German morale seems to have stiffened rather than weakened. Several factors have contributed to this development:

a. The German people expected (and Allied propaganda parallels with November 1918 have fostered this expectation) that the fall and winter of 1943 would bring the decisive crisis of the war and that, if they would overcome this crisis, they would somehow manage to stick it out to the end. Germany has now survived 1943.

b. The Germans have been impressed by the fact that the Southern front has apparently been stabilized, and that no major disaster has occurred on the Eastern front.

c. Intensified air raids have unquestionably led to local disruptions of the administration and increased war weariness and grumbling, but the Nazi control apparatus is still working effectively to hold down all opposition. The Party seems to have been even strengthened by the increased reliance of the German population on the functioning of its relief, welfare and protection organizations.

The German people see hope in their present reverses and hardships because of their comprehensive fear of the consequences of unconditional surrender. If this is the only alternative to the continuation of the war, the latter still seems to be more attractive (see above). Numerous prisoner of war interrogations show that fear of the future is one of the main factors which keeps the Nazi machine going, on the home front as well as in the battle line. "Enjoy the war, the peace will be terrible" has become a widespread saying in Germany.

A recent OSS morale report has summarized the situation as follows: "German opinion.....has become somewhat reconciled to fighting a war of survival. It no longer expects a great German triumph, and with the lowering of hopes and expectations there has come an apathetic adaptation to the harsh realities of the situation. Goebbels has a considerable following—even among non-Nazis—for his position that the only course for the German people is to dig in and gamble on the breakdown of the coalition arrayed against them—that this is better than to accept Anglo-Saxon advice to surrender unconditionally."^{1/}

ARGUMENT

9. The detrimental effect of the German use of the unconditional surrender formula as a propaganda weapon can be largely counteracted by a clear definition of the consequences of unconditional surrender for the German people as elaborated in official declarations of United Nations leaders. The following points may be made:

a. The policy of unconditional surrender was adopted not for the purpose of imposing a tyrannical and humiliating peace upon the German people but to fulfill the objective stated by President Roosevelt at the outbreak of the war—"the objective of smashing the militarism imposed by War Lords upon their enslaved peoples" (6 January 1942). The President declared that "only total victory can reward the champions of tolerance and decency and freedom and faith" (6 January 1942) because anything short of that might make it possible for Nazi and militarist overlords, whose pledged faith invites not the slightest trust, to renew their criminal aggressions.

b. President Roosevelt has made it clear that, while our only terms to an Axis government are unconditional surrender, "in our uncompromising policy we mean no harm to the common people of the Axis nations".

^{1/} OSS source A-20188, 1 February 1944. -- Cf. RAA #1658: German Morale at the End of 1943.

We intend only "to impose punishment and retribution in full upon their guilty, barbaric leaders". (12 February 1943). While just punishment will be meted out to the "ingleaders" responsible for atrocities committed against the peoples of Europe, "it is not the intention of the Government or of the Governments associated with us to resort to mass reprisals," and "the number of persons eventually found guilty will undoubtedly be extremely small compared to the total enemy populations."

c. In behalf of the United Nations President Roosevelt gave assurance, in his Christmas eve address of 1943, that we "have no intention to enslave the German people." It will be a major task of Allied Military Government in Germany to give suppressed cultural and social forces, such as the church, the universities, and the labor unions, an opportunity to regain strength and freedom by their own efforts. In military occupation, the United Nations will respect the Hague Convention, with its guarantees of personal freedom and private property, and also contribute, as far as their own resources permit, the food and other materials needed for the restoration of normal living. Secretary Hull has stated (16 November 1943) that the Moscow Declaration regarding Italy, with its proposals for the restoration of free and democratic institutions, is intended to be a model for the treatment of liberated areas in general.

d. The United Nations have no intention to extinguish Germany as a nation. They wish the German people, as President Roosevelt has declared, "to have a normal chance to develop, in peace, as useful and respectable members of the European family." (24 December 1943). They also recognize, subject to the prohibition of a restoration of

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Nazism, the right of the German people to choose freely their own form of government, in accordance with the principle of self-determination in the Atlantic Charter. This opportunity of free choice will be delayed after victory only as long as is necessary to root out those elements which have corrupted German political life; and to revive the natural conditions and forms of political life.

d. The United Nations do not wish, either in a period of military occupation or in pursuance of a peace treaty, to enslave the German people economically or to deprive them of the resources required for their own sustenance and their healthful economic development. As Prime Minister Churchill has stated, the view has been definitely adopted by Great Britain and the United States that "it is not in the interests of the world and of our two countries that any large nation should be unprosperous or shut out from the means of making a decent living for itself and its people by its industry and enterprise" (24 August 1941). To this principle the United Nations as a whole are committed by the declaration in the Atlantic Charter that "they will endeavor, with due respect for their existing obligations, to further the enjoyment by all States, great or small, victor or vanquished, of access, on equal terms, to the trade and to the raw materials of the world which are needed for their economic prosperity."